

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

May 11th, 2021

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday May 11th, 2021 at 7:00pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Phil Lasker, and Shirley Canniff. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also present. Scott Walker, Sarah Carrier, & Scott Lever were not in attendance.

Anticipated Speakers: Tom McCaughtry, Richard Hislop, Karen Grossman, Lauren Jaeger, Captain Richard Flynn

Members of the Public: Heather Cohen, Jan Devereux

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

Open Forum – Public Comment

N/A

Correspondence Received: Hills Hill Mountain Biking (Tom McCaughtry, Richard Hislop), Spy Pond Plaque (Karen Grossman)

Hills Hill Mountain Biking

Mr. Connelly reported that correspondence was received regarding unauthorized trail building on the Hill's Hill property. Mr. Connelly was shocked when this was received and he visited the property, noting that extensive work has been done. The Commission has a clear stance that unauthorized trail building is not allowed. The Commission shared their thoughts on this matter. Community member, Heather Cohen, was present on the call. Ms. Cohen stated that her husband was one of the individuals who sent the initial correspondence. Her family lives across the street from the property and they noticed in early May individuals entering the wooded property with tractors, chainsaws, etc. They reported this to the APD, but no further action was taken. This was then reported to Recreation and the Commission. At this time, it is not known who was responsible. The property destruction included cut down trees, removal of soil, embankments made, jumps built, etc. These features/actions are at a different level than the previously discussed trails at Crusher Lot. Concerns of safety were shared and ideas on how to move forward were discussed. This included the possibility of the removal of all unauthorized features at Hill's Hill. Commissioners plan to visit the site on their own to view the unauthorized work done and will report back at the next Commission meeting. It was suggested that Adam Glick be consulted, as the NEMBA has experience with mountain bike trail building. This is a serious matter and further action will be taken.

Spy Pond Plaque

Mr. Connelly spoke on this request. Changes to the wording of the plaque were noted. Community member Karen Grossman reported that half of the bench donation cost will be covered by the family of the individual the plaque will recognize. The other portion of the fee, which provides funding for maintenance costs, will be covered by the Friends of Spy Pond Group. This will supplement the other portion of the fee typically owed by the individual donating a bench and be used in the event that maintenance needs to occur to the bench over the next (8) years.

Planting Request Magnolia Park – Lauren Jaeger

Mr. Connelly discussed the Wildflower planting request received by Lauren Jaeger. Ms. Jaeger's original request was to plant Wildflowers at Thorndike Field, but Commissioners expressed a variety of concerns in relation to playing fields and the impact the flowers may have on them. Mr. Connelly noted that an alternative location of Magnolia Park is being proposed. Option 1 for the proposed planting location is in the existing fenced off community garden area, along the fence line. Option 2 is a triangular area in between pathways, near the basketball court entrance to the park. Commissioners shared concerns regarding the community garden location, expressing this may not be well received by gardeners and lead to similar issues to the concerns they had for Thorndike. It was determined that Option 2 is the ideal location for this Wildflower planting request. These native flowers will help beautify area and serve as pollinators in the intended non mowing area. Mr. Connelly will inform Ms. Jaeger of this decision. The Commission determined no official approval vote was need on this matter.

Off Leash Dog Discussion with Arlington Police Department – Captain Flynn

Arlington Police Captain, Richard Flynn, was present at this meeting to speak on the previously discussed increase of off leash dogs in Arlington. This matter revolves around concerns of safety and park policies not being followed (specific off leash dog locations/times). His attendance was requested by Mr. Connelly and the Commission. With over 30 years' experience, Captain Flynn reported that he recently moved to the operations side of the department. He is aware of the ongoing issues regarding dogs in Arlington. This has been a reoccurring topic over his years with the department. In this new role, he now oversees the Animal Control Officer. However, the individual currently holding that position has recently been out on personal leave. They have been receiving assistance in this department from the Town of Belmont when needed. However, this is for major issues only (dead animals). Captain Flynn shared the data below regarding APD and dogs.

<u>Dog Complaint Data Arlington Police Department</u>			
	2021	2020	2019
<i>Dog Complaints</i>	28	149	76
<i>Dog Bites</i>	2	20	18
<i>Dog Licenses</i>	2,267	2,086	2,200
<i>Citations</i>	0	5	9

The topic of off leash dogs in Town of Arlington Parks was discussed extensively amongst Commission Members, Mr. Connelly, and Captain Flynn. Specific topics included personal experience and thoughts on this issue. One point heavily discussed was the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had in relation to dogs. There has been an increase of dogs in Town, with more people working from home. This has resulted in more dogs on Town property, including at schools at drop off/pick up times. New dog owners may lack education and awareness of official policies.

In conclusion, it was determined that APD will work alongside Recreation and APS in the coming months to better address the current increase in issues with off leash dogs in Arlington. This will be done through communication, education, and enforcement. Captain Flynn will report back on the matter in the coming months. Ms. Mayer and the Commission thanked Captain Flynn for his support and efforts.

Future Field Use, Rental, and Potential Lease Agreements

Mr. Connelly brought up the topic of future field in relation to rental/lease agreements in Town for fields. This is the first discussion regarding this topic. Mr. Connelly noted that this was a general conversation about how Recreation would approach a lease agreement if a private school or organization in the area wanted to have an ongoing field/facility use agreement with the Town. Commissioners discussed this matter. With several Commission Members not in attendance, it was noted that this would be discussed more extensively at a later time. In the meantime, research on other Town's Field Lease Agreements will be done. Items to note were the Commissioners want to make sure that the priority moving forward is given to and for Arlington based groups; including all Town youth sports groups. If this is to be looked into further or ever occur, implementing tiers of access and/or at only select fields should also be considered.

Capital Projects Update

Mr. Connelly provided updates on the following capital projects:

Reservoir Phase II Building Project

Phase 2 building is going along and is scheduled to be completed by the opening of the Reservoir Beach season. Phase 1 consultant, Weston and Sampson, has been brought in to look at sewage/drainage.

Reservoir Phase II Site Work Project

The Department is very happy with the Phase 2 contractor, SumCo, so far. Recreation has been receiving numerous inquiries from community members about the project and what is occurring. A vast majority of the

scheduled tree work around the walking path has been completed, which will allow the path to be ADA Accessible. Many of the public's questions have been regarding this work and around marked/removed trees. Mr. Connelly reported that Arlington has received permission from the Town of Lexington to allow the project's contractor to access the site through Rindge Park. Bank restoration work has been occurring and the contractor will be looking to install the new boat ramp in the coming weeks with the water level down/pump system in place. The project is scheduled to be completed in its entirety by next May. Mr. Lasker questioned if new beach sand will be added at the completion of the project and if this was included into the original scope of work. This will be looked further into.

ADA Path Summer Street Complex

No updated to provide at this time.

Other Potential Projects

State Representative Sean Garballey has helped secure \$100,000 in funding to go toward playground improvements in Arlington. The Department is waiting to hear about an additional \$250,000 in funding for a CDBG or ADA eligible location. One potential site identified is Parmenter as it is in a CDBG eligible zone. The potential combined \$350,000 could go toward Phase 1 improvements at this site, located on the upper half of the facility. Phase 2 on the lower section of the facility would be done separately in the future when additional funding becomes available.

Recreation and Rink Updates

Mr. Connelly and Mr. Vaillette provided an update on recreation and rink operations. Items highlighted included both spring and summer programming. Spring programs are doing well and are in full force. The department staff has been very busy preparing for summer programs including Club Rec and the Reservoir Beach operation. A program that Mr. Connelly highlighted was the Walk the Rink Program which just began at the Ed Burns Arena, offered on both Tuesdays & Thursdays mornings.

Approval of Minutes – 4/13/21 & 4/27/21

The approval of the Park and Recreation Commission April 13th and April 27th Meeting Minutes was discussed. It was determined that the approval of these meeting minutes will be tabled until the next Commission Meeting to allow for more review time.

Comments and Items for Future Meetings

- *Carry In, Carry Out Trash Policy*
- *AYBSA Batting Cage Request*
- *Eagle Scout Project – Menotomy Rocks Park – Nishaad Vinayak*

Other

Ms. Rothenberg made the motion to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Lasker. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 4-0, at 9:25pm. The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.